



STATE OF MICHIGAN

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

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MDHHS recommends Michigan residents and visitors avoid foam on waterbodies

LANSING, Mich. – With summer approaching, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends residents and visitors avoid foam on Michigan waterbodies such as lakes, rivers and streams.

Foam can form on any waterbody. Natural foam is usually off-white and/or brown, can have an earthy or fishy scent, and tends to pile up in bays, eddies or at river barriers, such as dams.

Sometimes foam can contain harmful chemicals or bacteria. This can include high levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS-containing foam is usually bright white in color, lightweight and can pile up along shores or blow onto beaches. Some studies have found that high exposure to some PFAS is linked to high cholesterol and liver damage, among other health effects.

If you touch any foam, rinse off or bathe as soon as possible. This is especially true if the water is suspected to be contaminated with PFAS. Touching foam without rinsing off or bathing can lead to accidentally swallowing foam and its contents.

“Science tells us that the risk of PFAS entering your body through your skin is low, but you can accidentally swallow PFAS and other chemicals or bacteria if you do not rinse off or bathe after touching foam,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. “Rinsing off or bathing after water activities will help protect people from chemicals and bacteria that may be in foam or water.”

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) recommends that people do not allow their animals to touch or swallow foam on waterbodies. Animals are at risk of swallowing foam that has built up in their fur when grooming themselves. If animals touch foam, they should be rinsed off and bathed with fresh water. Pet owners with questions related to animals and foam should contact their veterinarian.

Anyone with questions about exposure to PFAS or foam can call the MDHHS Environmental Health Hotline at 800-648-6942. More information is available on the [MPART website](#).

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